

VZCZCXRO9412
RR RUEHDE
DE RUEHDE #2600/01 1300952
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 100952Z MAY 06
FM AMCONSUL DUBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0310
INFO RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0020
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0011
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 1467
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 3266
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBAI 002600

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA AND NEA/ARPI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [ET](#) [AE](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN THE UAE

1.(U) Summary: The Deputy Consul General of Ethiopia in Dubai told Poleconoff April 17 that there are some 30,000 Ethiopians in the UAE, 75 percent of whom work as domestic servants. Many Ethiopians flee from their employers and work illegally in other households or work as prostitutes. He characterized the recruitment of Ethiopian domestic servants as trafficking. He has also heard rumors of Ethiopian women being trafficked to Syria. End Summary.

Most Ethiopians Work as Domestic Servants

12. (U) Tesfay Desalegne, Ethiopia's Deputy Consul General in Dubai, told Poleconoff April 17 that the Ethiopian population in the UAE is estimated to be near 30,000, with the majority living in Dubai. 75 percent, or roughly 22,500 of the Ethiopians in the UAE, work as domestic servants. Most of the Ethiopians are women recruited to work in Emirati households, rather than for expats. Young Ethiopian women vie to work in Dubai because they believe they will be able to earn large salaries, but many are disappointed when they experience the realities of their jobs. Some seek assistance from the Ethiopian Consulate, while others run away from their sponsor to seek new jobs. "Thousands" of runaway domestics had sought assistance from the Consulate since it opened in 2004. The most common complaints were harsh working conditions, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse.

Ethiopian Domestics Not Protected By the Law

13. (SBU) Desalegne spoke of cases in which Emirati sponsors had avoided paying a domestic worker by canceling the visa without notice or reporting them as an absconder. Once her visa has been canceled, the employee must return to Ethiopia immediately without any legal recourse. The Consulate can do little for such individuals. Desalegne calls the system unfair, saying Emirati sponsors are "never" held accountable in such cases.

Choices for Absconding Domestics

14. (SBU) Desalegne said that most of the women who fled from their sponsors remained in Dubai to seek new employment in the "black market." Many seek work as domestics for Europeans in the Jumeirah area. Although they are vulnerable because they are

"absconders," many find the pay and working conditions with American or European families are far better than with the sponsoring Emirati families. In these situations, the benefits of working illegally far outweigh the risks of being arrested and deported.

Prostitution - An Alternative

15. (SBU) Some runaway Ethiopian domestic workers turn to prostitution. Desalegne believes that there may be up to 1000 Ethiopians working as prostitutes in Dubai. He believes that most of the women who turn to prostitution are runaway domestics who are "lured" into it by other Ethiopian women who also were former domestic workers. Aside from the large amounts of money they can earn, Desalegne said that some of the women think that working as a prostitute is "thrilling" and offers "excitement." Large numbers of Ethiopian prostitutes can be found at some of dance clubs at hotels in Dubai. The women Desalegne has spoken with view prostitution as a temporary job, which they will leave behind when they return to Ethiopia. Desalegne did not believe that Ethiopian women were trafficked to the UAE for the sex industry, nor did he know of any cases where Ethiopian women were working in the sex industry against their will.

Trafficking Ethiopians to the UAE

16. (SBU) On the other hand, Desalegne characterized much of the recruitment of Ethiopian domestic workers as trafficking. Although Ethiopians come to the UAE voluntarily, the Vice Consul General said, many were deceived by unscrupulous employment agents in Ethiopia, while others were convinced to come to the UAE on visit visas only to find that the promised job was

DUBAI 00002600 002 OF 002

non-existent.

17. (SBU) Many Ethiopians travel via circuitous routes to Dubai, generally via Nairobi, Kenya or Yemen, because Ethiopians traveling to Dubai on Ethiopian Airways are normally required to show proof of employment or other evidence proving legitimate travel. Ethiopians traveling to Dubai on visit visas -- many of whom are actually going to look for work or to start a promised job -- are not permitted on Ethiopian's direct flight, so they travel by other routes that are less well policed.

Trafficking From the UAE

18. (SBU) Desalegne said it is rumored in the community that some Ethiopian women are trafficked to Syria from the UAE. His understanding is that workers who have absconded or are unhappy in their current jobs are identified and then approached by other Ethiopians who promise them better jobs elsewhere. Those who accept are taken to Al Ain and then taken to Syria. Deslegne added that he has no concrete evidence of trafficking to Syria, but said it is widely rumored among Ethiopians.

Limited Resources

19. (U) According to Desalegne, the Ethiopian Consulate has limited resources and is unable to provide much assistance to abused or runaway domestic workers. The Consulate does not run a shelter, nor does it purchase repatriation tickets. The Consulate turns to the Ethiopian Community Association (ECA) for assistance. Generally, the ECA members will provide temporary housing and raise money for repatriation. In return, the Consulate supports ECA fundraising events.

DAVIS